Annual market

research confce

The 1" annual market research

conference of the country's lead-

ing market and social research

agency ORG-MARG Quest Ltd

(OMQ) was held at Hotel Sonar-

personalities belonging to differ-

ent multinational companies and

local conglomerates attended the

by the researchers of OMQ. There-

after a panel discussion was held.

The discussants were Jean Jacques

Walravens, Head of Brand Mar-

keting, British American Tobacco

Co Ltd (BAT), Mohammad

Habibul Ahad, Marketing Man-

ager-Food and Marketing Services,

Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd,

and Ashok Das, President ORG-

MARG India and Director, OMQ,

Amit Roy, President of ORG-

MARG India, and Director, OMQ

acted as the moderator of the

Mahathir says

taxing proposal

Prime Minister Mahathir Mo-

hamad said that several rich

countries rejected his proposal to

tax wealthy nations to fund proj-

ects in developing countries and

ease global poverty, the national

news agency Bernama said Satur-

a conference in Hainan, China,

last month, saying that rich coun-

tries should pay the tax as the

price for pushing poor ones to

cizes globalization as a tool of

economic control exercised by

rich nations, admitted on Saturday

that the idea drew a cool response.

tries, but the rich countries of

course did not accept it, as no rich

"We have asked some coun-

Mahathir, who frequently criti-

open their markets.

Mahathir made the proposal at

panel discussion session.

rich nations

rejected his

AP, Kuala Lumpur

conference, says a press release.

A large number of corporate

Several papers were presented

of OMQ held

gaon on Thursday.

# BUSINESS

# Indian share prices plunge on arrest news of 'Bombay Bull'

SISTANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HOUSE NO-98, ROAD NO-9A(NEW) DHANMONDIRA

SATURDAY THE 31ST MARCH- 2001

REUTERS, Kolikata

Indian shares fell sharply Friday on news that the biggest speculafor in the market was about to be arrested, stoking fears his favourite stocks are likely to plunge fur-

After market hours, Indian police said they had arrested influential broker Ketan Parekh, known as the "Bombay Bull" in market circles for the heavy influence he wielded over the prices of a number of volatile stocks - particularly

tors. tors faith in a system plagued by a slide. series of crises and investigations by the market regulator.

Analysts said Parekh's arrest doing could lead to panic selling when

RITITERS, Washington

on Friday.

A top Japanese government offi-

cial's comment that the Bush ad-

ministration had considered try-

ing to help tapan by letting the ven

currency sink in value drew only

icy, would represent a significant

shift in US attitude and that pros-

Japanese Economics Minister Taro

Aso's statement, made at a news strong dollar.

the markets reopen on Monday.

It is a crescendo of bad news. Whatever little hope was left that Ketan would come in support of some stocks has now evaporated." said Mathew Easow of Mathew Easow Securities. "In some stocks there may be a grand finale of

He said the BSE index could fall another 5-8 per cent next week and then stabilise at that level.

During the past month brokers defaulted on payment obligations. in the technology and media sec- tax authorities raided brokers accused of insider trading and On Friday the Bombay Stock price manipulation, and the BSE Exchange (BSE) benchmark 30- president resigned amid allegaissue Sensitive Index fell 3.92 per tions that he leaked privileged look remained gloomy. cent of 3,604.38. It plunged 15.13 information to other brokers, preper cent in March, shaking inves- cipitating the initial market mud-

On Friday, the president of the . Investor remain jittery in the facing financial problems.

Muhammad Shams-ul Haque, Chairman and Managing Director of Jute Spinners Limited, addresses the com-

pany's 21st Annual General Meeting held at its head office in the city yesterday. Muhammad Shams-ul Huda, Di-

US mum on Japan economic

conference in Tokyo, that the new

while Treasury said it would have

about Aso's comments, which

in the standard US policy that

the White House would discuss drive foreign-exchange values and ous parts of the US government.

that the United States favour a

Analysts expressed skepticism

US administration had bandied () Neill, after a bout of comusion

around the idea of letting the yen early in his tenure caused by re-

sink, which would benefit Japan's marks to a German newspaper in

change rates," White House of the former Clinton administra-

"We don't comment on ex- icv was "Exactly the same" as that

rector, FR Chowdhury, Executive Director, and Bijoy Krishna Saha, Company Secretary, were also present.

minister's comment on yen

'Bush admn opted for letting yen sink'

Export-driven economy.

stony silence in Washington Fri-, spokesperson Claire Buchan said, tion.

Such a view, if adopted as pol-nothing to sav on the matter.

pect pushed the dollar's value up seemed to imply a potential shift

Neither the US Treasury nor economic fundamentals should

Calcutta Stock Exchange and all its face of continued evidence of broker-directors resigned. The CSI: faced a severe payment crisis earlier this month, adding to the gloom in the falling market.

Thorough cleaning up

Analysts said authorities would need to take clear steps to restore the confidence of shaken inves-

There has to be a thorough cleaning up. Right now the investor is thinking how many more skeletons are there in the cupboard," said Ajay Kejriwal, director at Jet Age Securities.

Fund managers said the out-

"Things look bad for now. Unless the domestic issues are sorted out, we do not see the market sharply March 1 after the BSE The former BSE president. An- stabilising," said Vibhav Kapoor, president allegedly leaked inforand Rathi, has denied any wrong- managing director. IL&FS Asset mation showing that Parekh, the

PHOTO JUTE SPINNERS

February, reasserted that his pol-

Former treasury secretaries

Robert Rubin and Lawrence

Summers regularly repeated that

"A strong dollar is in the US inter-

est," making it a virtual mantra for

but I think O'Neill was against it,"

"It was discussed within vari-

their policy stance.

Aso said.

payment problems caused by the sharp equity market decline.

On Thursday the Bank of India reported it suffered a 1.3 billion rupees (\$27.9 million) loss after cheques by a troubled cooperative bank bounced.

On Friday the Punjab National Bank said it may lose 170 million rupees due to the financial problems at cooperative banks located in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The cheques were issued by Madhavpura Mercantile Cooperative Bank and Classic Cooperative Bank, arousing concern those banks are experiencing financial problems caused by heavy lending to now insolvent brokers.

Indian shares began falling speculator arrested on Friday, was

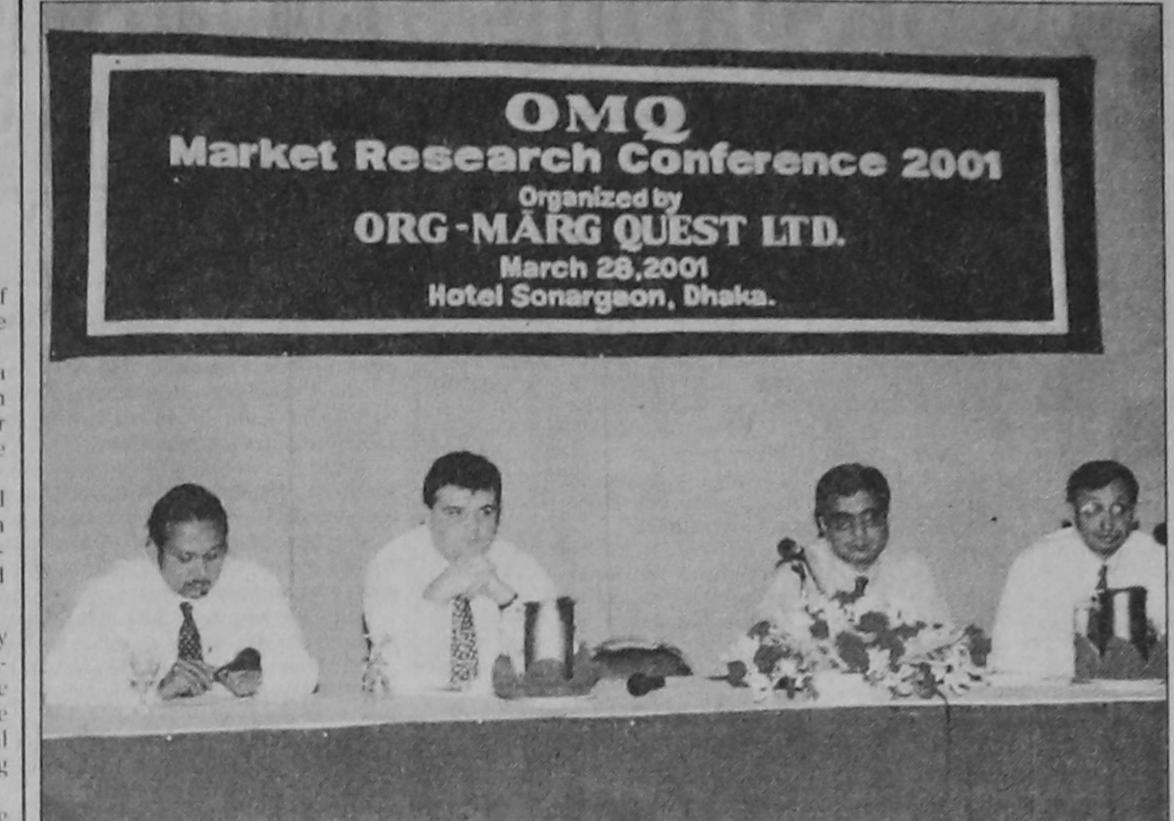


PHOTO: UNITREND

Picture shows (from left to right) Amit Roy, ORG-MARG India, Jean Jacques Walravens, British American Tobacco Co Ltd (BAT), Muhammad Habibul Ahad, Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd, and Ashok Das, ORG-MARG India, at the 1st annual market research conference of OMQ in the city Thursday.

### Jute Spinners Ltd declares 10pc dividend

The Jute Spinners Limited has declared a 10 per cent dividend for the financial year 1999-2000.

The dividend was announced at the 21" Annual General Meeting of the company held at its head office in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

Muhammad Shams-ul Haque, Chairman and Managing Director of the company presided over the meeting. The annual report along with the auditors report was approved unanimously at the meet-

Among others, Muhammad Shams-ul Huda, Director, Mohammad Faizur Rahman Chowdhury, Executive Director, and Bijoy Krishna Saha, Company Secretary, were also present at the meeting. A large number of shareholders attended the meeting.

#### Mercantile Bank opts for GP mobiles

Mercantile Bank Limited has recently signed an agreement with GrameenPhone Limited under its Corporate Sales Package initiative. says a GP press release.

Under the agreement, Mercantile Bank has been provided with GrameenPhone's GP-GP mobile phone connections. The bank is now using GP mobiles to maintain efficient communication among its different branches.

This is enabling Mercantile to conduct faster and more secured transactions. Subscription of the GP Corporate Sales Package will significantly reduce Mercantile Bank's inter-district communication costs.

With the implementation of its expansion plan, more branches of the bank will come under this communication system. In future, Mercantile Bank will use data transmission facilities of GP for inter-branch transactions.

Ferdousur Rahman, Head of Corporate Sales of Grameen-Phone, and M Nurul Islam, Deputy Managing Director of Mercantile Bank, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. M Taheruddin, Managing Director of Mercantile Bank, and Kafil H S Muyeed, Additional General Manager, Sales and Marketing Division, Arif Al Islam, Additional General Manager, Finance Division of GrameenPhone, were also present at the signing ceremony.

It may be noted that Prime Bank Limited is already using GP-GP mobiles under the Corporate Sales Package initiative and Uttara Bank, UCBL, Dutch Bangla Bank and South East Bank will soon subscribe to take those facilities.

### Meet on Central-North America free trade next week

Finance ministers from 34 North. South and Central American countries meeting here next week will discuss prospects for a hemispheric free trade agreement and likely to delve into talks on worldwide energy concerns, a Canadian official said Friday.

The ministers will examine ways to finance initiatives in the Summit of the Americas Plan of Action, look at the question of abuses of international financial systems, and exchange views on the benefits of new information and communication technologies.

Discussions at the April 3-4 meeting also will touch on the prevailing uncertainty in global economies as well as the policy

intentions of new leadership in Argentina, Mexico and the United States, a senior Canadian Finance Ministry official said at a background briefing. Asked whether energy con-

cerns will be addressed, the official, who asked not to be named, said many delegates coming to the meeting expressed great interest in "what the US policy intentions US President George W Bush

has repeatedly said the United States must reduce its dependence on imported oil and develop its own energy resources, including those in an Alaskan wildlife refuge.

The official also said delegates wanted to know more about Argentina's new finance minister, Domingo Cavallo, who will be as well as FTAA issues.

attending the two-day meeting. The Argentine Congress on

Thursday gave final approval to a bill granting Cavallo and his government special powers to deal with a 33-month economic reces-

At the second Summit of the Americas, in 1994, leaders agreed to negotiate a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005. That endeavor will be the central focus of the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec on April 20-22.

Finance ministers were tasked with helping further develop and integrate capital markets in the hemisphere, but at three previous ministerial meetings, delegates discussed ways to promote sustained growth and reduce poverty

people would want to be taxed," Bernama quoted him as saying. "They want to make money and keep it for themselves. Mahathir did not identify the countries, but said Malaysia would

continue to promote the idea to protect the interests of developing "A globalized world where you can do business freely, without

obstruction of borders, can only benefit those who have the money," Bernama quoted him as Mahathir, who has ruled Ma-

laysia since 1981, said the Southeast Asian country will continue to tread cautiously in dealing with globalisation.

#### IBBL board recommends 25pc dividend

The Board of Directors of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited has recommended a 25 per cent cash dividend for its shareholders for

the year 2000, says a press release. The recommendation was made at the board's 100th meeting

in the city on Thursday. Yousif Abdullah Al-Rajhi, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the bank and representative of Al-Rajhi Co for Industry and

meeting. The meeting approved the profit and loss account and balance sheet for the year ending December 31, 2000.

Trade, KSA, presided over the

The board also declared final rates of profit for 2000 on different types of Mudaraba deposits as 12.36 per cent for Mudaraba Special Savings (Pension) Deposit-10 years, 10.46 per cent for Mudaraba Special Savings (Pension) Deposit-5 years, 11.88 per cent for Mudaraba Savings Bond-8 years, 10.46 per cent for Mudaraba Savings Bond-5 years, 10.46 per cent for Mudaraba Hajj Savings Deposit, 9.51 per cent for Mudaraba Term Deposit-36 months, 9.32 per cent for Mudaraba Term Depositi-24 months, 9.13 per cent for Mudaraba Term Deposit-12 months, 8.75 per cent for Mudaraba Term Deposit-6 months, 8.37 per cent for Mudaraba Term Deposit-3 months, 7.60 per cent for Mudaraba Savings Deposit, 5.70 per cent for Mudaraba Special Notice Account and 4.20 per cent for Mu-

daraba Foreign Currency Deposit. The board also evaluated the overall performance of the bank and expressed its satisfaction at the significant progress achieved during the period.

The meeting decided that the 18th annual general meeting of the bank would be held on July 12. Local and foreign directors in-

cluding Professor Korkut Ozal, Representative of Islamic Development Bank (IDB), KSA, Hamad Al-Hajeri. Representative of The Public Insummon for Social Security, Kuwait, and Engineer Muhammad Fouad Al-Khaeeb, KSA

## Malaysia's forex

REUTERS, Shanghai

strong

reserves still

Malaysia's central bank governor said Friday the country's declining foreign reserves were still strong, and the government would finance a near \$800 million fiscal stimulus domestically.

Zeti Akhtar Aziz was speaking to a news conference in Shanghai shortly after her bank, Bank Negara, published figures showing that the country's international currency reserves stood at \$ 28.99 billion on February 28.

This marks a drop of \$5.5 billion over nine months. Analysts have said that of the erosion continues at this pace, Malaysia's currency peg would need adjusting in late 2001.

#### Monthly ReadyCash Raffle Draw Winners The latest monthly draw of the fortunate prize winners took

place last Thursday at the ReadyCash office at Dhanmondi in the city with M E Islam, Corporate Secretary, American International (BD) Ltd, choosing the winners. This is part of the commitment ReadyCash undertakes to reward valuable and loyal cardholders.

Prizes for new cardholders Card No Prizes Name of winners 5047980000007176 Mohd Rafigul Islam Pearl Restaurant free lunch for two Mohammed Noman Federal Express free 5047980000007144 shipment Great Wall restaurant free Taslima Khondoker 5047980000007162 lunch for two Md Abdul Baten 5047980000007139 Yantai Chinese Restaurant free lunch for two 5047980000007142 Pizza Inn free lunch for Md Hamidullah

New ReadyCash cardholders will become eligible for prizes as soon as they apply for a card and make a transaction. Winners can collect their prizes from the Public Relations Manager of ReadyCash within 30 days of this news circulation by producing their Ready-Cash card transaction vouchers. Besides, regular users of the ReadyCash card will also be eligible to win attractive prizes. For details, one may contact 8125294-7. ReadyCash encourages its cardholders to read The Daily Star on every Sunday for a new listing of prize winners.



A meeting of the Board of Directors of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) was held on Thursday at the Boardroom of the bank at Islami Bank Tower with Yousif Abdullah Al-Rajhi, Vice-Chairman of the Board and representative of Al-Rajhi Co. for Industry and Trade, KSA in the Chair.

### Filipino foreign debt totals \$52b at end of 2000

two organisations under GP Corporate Sales Package drive.

REUTERS, Manila

The Philippine central bank said Saturday the country's outstanding external debt totalled \$52.06 billion at the end of 2000 with obligations of the public sector comprising the bulk.

In a statement, central bank governor Rafael Buenaventura said the figure had risen from \$51.85 billion at end-October.

Obligations of the public secfor, which consist of the national government, government-owned corporations, the central bank, and government financial institulions, accounted for about two-

thirds of the total external debt. The private sector held the bal-

### Commodity: Weekly Roundup

### Oil prices slip on large US stocks build-up

AFP, London

Oil prices fell this week in restocks and news that the US gov- increase of 8.9 million barrels, ernment had granted an extension while official figures put the rise at to oil majors on the return of 11.2 million. crude the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

Officials of GrameenPhone and Mercantile Bank are seen at the signing ceremony of a recent deal between the

In London, benchmark Brent rels. North Sea crude for May delivery eased to 24.92 dollars a barrel on Friday afternoon from 25.2 dollars a week earlier.

crude May contract stood at 26.50 a week earlier. Prices came under pressure

over the previous week than had been expected. The private American Petro-

sponse to a large build-up in leum Institute (API) estimated an

Analysts had been expecting a rise of less than two million bar-

Traders said that prices had also been undermined by news that several oil majors had been given an extra year to return crude In New York, the light sweet to the US SPR, which the White House agreed last year to tap to dollars a barrel, against 27 dollars rein in prices from 10-year highs above 35 dollars a barrel.

The market was also growing after figures showed that US doubtful that members of the stocks rose much more sharply Organisation of Petroleum Ex- week

porting Countries (OPEC) would comply fully with the four-percent output cut due to begin on April 1. Rubber: Limp. Rubber prices earlier

stagnated this week with scant buying interest, dealers said. In London, the April rubber index edged up to 48.75 pence from

In Kuala Lumpur, the RSS index stood at 2.285 ringgits per kilo

from 2.24 ringgit the previous Cocoa: Steamy, Cocoa prices continued to climb.

On London's LIFFE financial futures exchange, the price of a tonne of cocoa for July delivery rose to 847 pounds on Thursday from 811 pounds the previous

On New York's CSCE market, the July contract climbed to 1,077 dollars from 1,039 dollars a week

The market is trying to see if 850 pounds is the floor of a new trading range that could go up to 1,100 pounds like in 1993 and 1999, or whether it's the limit," said Jerome Jourguin, a trader at the Refco brokerage in Paris.

Municipal elections over the weekend in number-one producer Ivory Coast passed off generally peacefully, in stark contrast to sweeping violence during last year's polls, easing concerns of earlier. supply disruptions.

Coffee: Cut. Coffee prices contracts fell to 220.50 dollars a edged up this week as several coffee-producing countries agreed to previous week.

On LIFFE, Robusta quality for May delivery was selling for 594

cut exports in a bid to shore up

dollars a tonne from 591 dollars a week ago. Sugar: Cubed. Sugar prices

remained under pressure this week, as traders fretted about weak demand and a leading producer body said it expected a glut to continue to weigh on the market and prices.

In New York, a pound of white sugar for May delivery dropped to 8.38 cents from 8.46 cents a week

On the London market, May tonne against 225.50 dollars the

away from 20-month lows this week, helped by steadier financial markets, though weak US exports pulled prices lower again towards On the Chicago Board of Trade

Soya: Warm. Soya prices pulled

(CBoT), a bushel of soya for May delivery rose to 4.3650 dollars from 4.3425 dollars the previous Grains: Growing. Wheat prices

recovered this week, while maize prices drifted slightly higher, as poor weather conditions in Kansas threatened grain crops. Maize prices were capped

however by disappointing figures showing that US exports the previous week were 10 per cent lower were present at the meeting. than a year ago.